

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-02 COME-00 SS-15 NSC-05 MC-02

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7316

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS BEXP, OEXC, GB

SUBJ: INFORMATIQUE DELEGATION

REF: STATE 063953

REF:LIBREVILLE 0022, STATE 010370, STATE 007657

SUMMARY: IN LETTER ADDRESSED TO SECRETARY KISSINGER, PRESIDENT BONGO HAS REQUESTED USAID GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT IN COMPUTER SCIENCE FIELD FOLLOWING U.S. VISIT OF GABONESE DELEGATION. DELEGATION APPARENTLY UNDER IMPRESSION THAT SUCH ASSISTANCE PROMISED BY AID/W DURING VISIT.

ACTION REQUESTED: A) DEPARTMENT CONCURRENCE TO AMBASSADOR REPLYING ON SECRETARY'S BEHALF, TO BONGO'S REQUEST; AND B) MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN WASHINGTON MEETINGS BETWEEN USAID AND GOG DELEGATION.

1. EMBASSY RECEIVED JAN. 17 LETTER FROM PRESIDENT BONGO TO SECRETARY KISSINGER REQUESTING GRANT ASSISTANCE IN COMPUTER SCIENCE TRAINING. REQUEST FOLLOWS INFORMATIQUE DELEGLZION VISIT TO U.S. DEC. 11-23 AND WAS PROBABLY PREPARED FOR BONGO'S SIGNATURE BY DELEGATION HEAD LOUIS INGONGUI.

2. USAID SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO FURNISH:

A) FIVE SCHOLARSHIPS ANNUALLY FOR U.S. UNIVERSITY TRAINING IN
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COMPUTER SCIENCE FOR GABONESE STUDENTS;

B) TWO SCHOLARSHIPS ANNUALLY FOR TRAINING OF GABONESE COMPUTER STATISTICIANS IN BUREAU OF CENSUS IN WASHINGTON;
C) "AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT" AND TRAINING FOR THREE GABONESE IN ITS USE.

3. IN ADDITION, LETTER REQUESTES ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING FOR TRAINING OF FIVE GABONESE AT IBM'S FEDERAL SYSTEMS CENTER IN GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND, IN USE OF LAND AND SUBSOIL INFORMATION FOR PLANNING NEW NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT. (LIBREVILLE OFFICE OF IBM FRANCE PASSING THIS REQUEST ON TO IBM WORLD TRADE IN WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK).

4. GOG PREPARED TO PAY FOR IBM TRAINING BUT NO INDICATION IN LETTER THAT GABONESE WILLING TO PAY COSTS OF TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT REQUESTED FROM USIAD.

5. AFTER RECEIPT ONGO LETTER, EMBOFF MET WITH INGONGUI JAN. 20 AND INFORMALLY EXPLAINED THAT USAID HIGHLY UNLIKELY BE IN POSITION TO OFFER GRANT ASSISTANCE AS REQUESTED BY GOG. HOWEVER, INGONGUI REMAINED CONVINCED THAT HIS DELEGATION HAD RECEIVED ASSURANCES IN WASHINGTON THAT AID SUBSEQUENTLY REQUESTED IN BONGO'S LETTER WOULD BE FORTHCOMING. HE ALSO GAVE EMBOFF COPY OF INFORMATIQUE DELEGATION'S REPORT OF U.S. VISIT CITING THESE OFFERS OF USAID ASSISTANCE IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL. WITH REGARD TO SCHOLARSHIPS, FOR EXAMPLE, INGONGUI REPORT ALLEGES THAT AID/W PROMISED FIVE GRANTS PER YEAR ON WHICH GOG WOULD PAY TRANSPORTATION PLUS \$275 EACH FOR MISCELLANEOUS COSTS, UNIVERSITIES WOULD OFFER FREE TUITION, AND AID WOULD COVER LIVING EXPENSES FOR STUDENTS. REPORT ALSO CLAIMS AID/W AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL AND EXIM READINESS TO FINANCE PURCHASES OF ANY DESIRED COMPUTER MATERIAL.

6. COMMENT: IN ACCORDANCE STATE REFTELS, WE HAVE TRIED SINCE HIS RETURN TO DISABUSE INGONGUI OF HIS IMPRESSION THAT GRANT ASSISTANCE LIKELY BE FORTHCOMING. HOWEVER, CIRCULATION OF HIS REPORT WITHIN GOG AND SIGNATURE OF LETTER BY PRESIDENT CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE FIRMNESS OF HIS CONVICTION THAT AID WAS PROMISED DURING THEIR VISIT, AND WE NOW FACE PROBLEM OF LETTING GOG DOWN AS GENTLY AS POSSIBLE.
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7. ACTION REQUESTED: IF DEPT CONCURS, EMBASSY PROPOSED THAT AMBASSADOR REPLY TO BONGO LETTER ON SECRETARY'S BEHALF ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: (A) USAID UNABLE TO PROVIDE REQUESTED GRANT AID TO GABON SINCE U.S. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE BEING CHANNELLED TO POOREST COUNTRIES; (B) WHILE GABON NOT POOR IN COMPARISON WITH LESS-FAVORED NEIGHBORS, USG RECOGNIZES THAT IT DOES HAVE GENUINE NEED FOR TECHNOLOGY AND

TRAINING IN COMPUTER FIELD; AND (C) UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES,
AID/W PREPARED TO ARRANGE AND FACILITATE TRAINING IN U.S.
IF GOG WILLING TO PAY COSTS, AND EXIM PREPARED CONSIDER
SYMPATHETICALLY ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS PROVISION OF CREDIT
FOR GOG PURCHASE OF TRAINING AIDS AND COMPUTER HARDWARE
OR SOFTWARE.

8. EMBASSY BELIEVES THIS APPROACH PUTS MOST POSITIVE FACE
POSSIBLE ON WHAT AMOUNTS TO REFUSAL OF ALL REQUESTS IN BONGO
LETTER.

9. WOULD ALSO BE HELPFUL TO HAVE AID/W VERSION OF MEETINGS
WITH INFORMATIQUE DELEGATION PROMISED IN REFTEL C.

10. COPIES OF BONGO LETTER AND INFORMATIQUE DELEGATION'S
REPORT BEING POUCHED TO AF/C.STEIGMAN

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